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ABSTRACT

This document found that the California school system has managed to improve its efficiency and performance over the last decade. However, the system is strained to capacity and will have a difficult time meeting upcoming challenges. It must be redesigned to shift the responsibility for improving student achievement to the local level and replace the traditional school system with a new achievement-based system of schools. The report recommends that California establish statewide curriculum content and performance standards, a statewide assessment procedure, an accountability system, and a deadline for school districts' redesign. To shift to this new system, the state must change its focus from one of control to that of support. Suggestions are to focus on student achievement, reconnect schools and communities, and build a framework of support for the new system. The latter can be accomplished if California educators and policymakers improve the education and training of school staff; identify networks, partnerships, and other support structures; expand the education system's technological capacity; restore the strength and vitality of urban schools; and provide adequate and equitable funding. A timeline for the period 1995-2002 is included. (LMI)

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RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

A NEW AGENDA FOR CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

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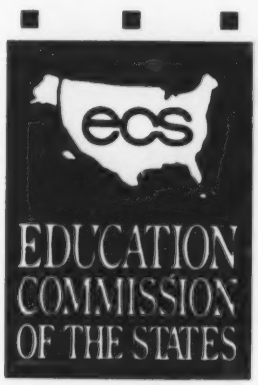
RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

A new agenda for California schools and communities



MARCH 1995

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ECS is a national, nonprofit, nonpartisan education policy organization. Established 30 years ago by the nation's governors to help states attain and sustain a stronger role in improving education, ECS today is the only major education organization that works with policymakers and educators from all aspects of the education system. This distinction as an organization that cuts across roles and levels — local, district, state, federal — enables us to analyze all sides of an issue and, more important, bring together people with diverse perspectives to work with and learn from one another.

Each state and territory passes legislation to become a member of ECS. And each state or territory appoints, usually through the Governor's office, seven ECS commissioners who represent all segments of education.

Part of the work of the commission includes working with policymakers and educators in individual states comprehensive, bipartisan, forward-looking strategies for improving their education system.

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The following list provides examples of the groups of people with whom ECS staff met over the past year. It is not exhaustive and does not include the individuals we communicated with via telephone.

Organizations/Agencies:

Association of California School Administrators

Association for the Improvement of Secondary Education

California Aerospace Alliance

California Alliance of Pupil Service Organizations

California Assessment Collaborative

California Association of Manufacturers

California Business Roundtable

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

California Community Colleges System

California Chamber of Commerce

California County Superintendents Association Board

California Federation of Teachers

California Legislative Staff — Senate and Assembly

California School Employees Association

California School Boards Association

California Postsecondary Education Commission

California State Board of Education

California State Department of Education

California State PTA

California Tomorrow

California Teachers' Association

Children Now

EdSource

Educational Congress of California

Galef Institute

Governor's Office staff

LEARN Board

Los Angeles High School Division Pupil Services Professionals

Los Angeles Senior High Schools Division Principals

The Management Group

Mockler Halnan Strategic Education Services

PACE

Office of Child Development and Education

Schools for the Future

State Assembly Leadership and Selected Education Committee Members

State Senate Leadership and Selected Education Committee Members

The California State University System

United Teachers Los Angeles

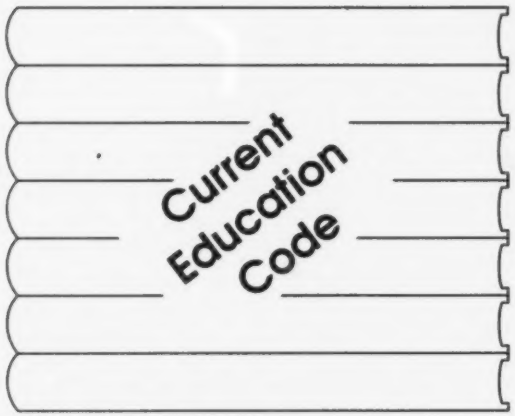
United Public Employees Association

University of Southern California School of Education Board of Councilors

and selected school districts, schools and university faculty members

Current Regulatory School System

Regulated
Micromanaged
Legislated
Isolated



Transition to New System

FOCUS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

RECONNECT SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

- Enterprise Plans for Districts
- Charters for Schools

BUILD FRAMEWORK OF SUPPORT

New Achievement-Based System of Schools

Achievement-focused
Locally Controlled
Flexible
Collaborative

New Code

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The powerful forces transforming the world have particular potency in California. The California economy is widely seen as the prototype of an economy on the cutting edge of change. It is built around those industries — computers, software, aircraft, semiconductors, entertainment — that are leading the transformation. California looks like the emerging technological society, knowledge society or post-industrial society. Whatever we call it, California demands a workforce with far greater intellectual skills, knowledge and capacity.

California is also the harbinger of another change that is transforming this country: its population is diverse in every dimension. More than any other state, California must learn how to make a sophisticated economy work with a population that represents a greater array of income levels, races and national origins than any we have seen before. But such an economy requires much greater skills from its citizens and cannot work if a large percentage of its people cannot contribute effectively.

The changes that demand more effective education go well beyond the economy to changes in the nature of our democratic society. Just as greater intellectual skills, knowledge and capacity are important in the workforce, so are they in one's life as a citizen. The complex issues facing individuals as voters, as parents, as users of the health-care or legal systems, et cetera, demand a more sophisticated and better educated individual. Even more, the problems we face require greater citizen involvement.

As California closes in on the 21st Century, it is coming out of a major recession. However, this recovery is different from past economic recoveries. We believe California can look forward to renewed economic growth and a return to national leadership; however, it cannot expect a return to conditions that existed during previous recoveries when major increases in funding were available and the public favored heavy investment in schools and the higher education system. While we believe California needs to transform its education system — a transformation more fundamental than ever before attempted — it must do so within more serious fiscal constraints. Californians must be convinced that the task can be accomplished before they will be willing to provide additional resources.

All of this points to the inescapable fact that the state must have a different, more effective, more achievement-oriented, more efficient education system.

These conditions led Governor Pete Wilson and other state leaders to request that the Education Commission of the States examine California's public education system. Over the past year, we met with policymakers, educators, board members, parents, university officials and others who play a role in the education system. We examined census data, job-market trends, public opinion polls, media coverage, student achievement data and other statistics.

What we found is a school system that has managed to improve its efficiency and performance over the last decade but which is now strained to capacity and will have a difficult time meeting the challenges that lie ahead.

More than any other state, California must learn how to make a sophisticated economy work with a population that represents a greater array of income levels, races and national origins than any we have seen before.

Clearly, California's school system must be redesigned to shift the responsibility for improving student achievement to the local level, where the stakes are highest and where constructive change is most likely to occur. We believe the California system must undergo comprehensive decentralization and deregulation, with the traditional school system being replaced by a **system of schools**, each focused on high achievement and providing a safe and orderly environment for children in the community. This will require profound changes in how schools are regulated, funded and held accountable for results.

Recommendations

We recommend that California create a new **achievement-based system of schools** focused on improving individual and overall student achievement and including more reliable means of evaluating school, district and overall system performance.

California should begin this change by building on the curriculum frameworks it has developed in eight academic areas. These frameworks contain a vision of the skills and knowledge all students should have.

To build a new system of schools, we suggest California make these statements stronger and more explicit by establishing **statewide content and performance standards** defining what students should know and be able to do at various points in their schooling.

Second, a new **statewide assessment** is needed to ensure that students are meeting the standards. However, we strongly recommend that the new statewide assessment be used in conjunction with additional, diverse teaching and testing strategies at the local level.

Third, we recommend that a **statewide accountability system** be developed to keep the public informed as to the progress toward these standards.

Finally, the state should set a deadline for all school districts to redesign themselves around this new **achievement-based school system** and eliminate the current regulatory system.

To shift to this new system, the state must **change its focus from controlling schools and districts to supporting them**. The new system should allow schools and districts to make the decisions necessary to educate their students with minimal interference from the state. Local school boards must take on new roles by offering choice and flexibility within their district and by engaging staff and community members in discussions about moving into the new system. This new system must be adequately and equitably funded, with teamwork, innovation and success recognized and rewarded, and with schools given the resources, tools and incentives they need to create top-quality learning environments.

As a whole, these and other recommendations summarized below form the framework for a California Master Plan for Public Education. It is essential to understand that these recommendations are meant to be implemented in a comprehensive manner, as a Master Plan, not piecemeal. Isolated attempts at such reforms in the past have brought limited success.

We recommend the Governor, Legislature and Superintendent of Public Instruction appoint a bipartisan panel to begin work on this Master Plan immediately, with the panel to submit its implementation proposals to the Governor, Superintendent, State Board of Education, Legislature, local school boards and the public within a year.

Our recommendations for the new achievement system fall into three major areas:

I. *Focus on Student Achievement.* In addition to establishing statewide standards and redesigning the state assessment program, we recommend the state move responsibility for improving student achievement to schools and districts. This process should include significant community involvement, regular reporting to the public, rewards for success and sanctions for poor school performance.

II. *Reconnect Schools and Communities.* A locally controlled education system must involve families, schools and communities as equal and essential partners. The local school board and superintendent should lead the conversation about moving into the new achievement system and designing the district's "Enterprise Plan" for doing so. We recommend that districts be allowed to move from the existing system and into the new system when they are ready. The state should provide districts with regulatory relief and autonomy, while maintaining safeguards to ensure that equity, safety, fiscal responsibility and other matters of public interest are maintained. Districts would have until the 2001-2 school year to make the transition to the new system.

III. *Build a Framework of Support for the New System of Schools.* In order for these recommendations to be carried out, California needs a strong infrastructure of support for reform. The key elements of this infrastructure are:

The new system should allow schools and districts to make the decisions necessary to educate their students with minimal interference from the state.

- **Make sure people who work in the schools are well-prepared before they enter schools, participate in targeted professional development opportunities and have the tools and incentives they need to do their jobs well.** We suggest California begin moving toward a competency-based teacher education system that defines the skills, abilities and knowledge teachers should have when they graduate and which bases advancement on demonstrated teaching ability. In addition, California should decentralize the professional development process — many opportunities are designed too far away from the school, and too far in advance, to be useful. The Master Plan Panel should give advice regarding how to evaluate and approve professional development opportunity suppliers and then allow school staffs to draft their own strategies for professional development as they move into the new system.

- **Identify and strengthen networks, partnerships and other support structures.** Ideas must flow across the system, from school to school and community to community, as well as from the state to the school and vice versa. To link people and ideas, and to build professional ties, we recommend the Master Plan Panel develop an inventory of state networks working on education reform, partnerships that work across agencies, those that focus on specific subject areas, those involving businesses and others. This inventory should assess each partner's capacity to assist schools and provide information about the network or partnership. The panel also may need to develop incentives for schools and districts to participate in networks and partnerships and should offer a plan to blend federal funds to better address needs of children, families and communities.
- **Expand the technological capacity of schools and districts.** Although California has taken many steps forward, including developing a statewide technology master plan, efforts to implement the plan have been disconnected, unfocused and underfunded. We recommend that the Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction develop a technological action plan to submit to the State Board of Education, local boards and the Legislature. This plan should focus on expanding training opportunities for teachers, administrators, local school board members and school staff; developing funding sources; promoting the use of telecommunications; and distributing technology in new ways.
- **Restore the strength of urban schools.** The Governor and Legislature, in conjunction with the Superintendent of Public Instruction, should appoint a task force to look at how to raise expectations for student achievement; redesign district structure and organization to help urban schools work together and support one another; strengthen the authority of school-site decisionmaking groups; and coordinate education, social, health and other services. This task force would work in conjunction with the Master Plan Panel and others dealing with urban education.
- **Provide an adequately and equitably funded education system.** In order to support the new achievement system, we recommend the development of a new school finance system that gives greater control over resource allocation and, eventually, revenue raising to local schools and districts. Schools and districts should be allowed to spend funds as they deem necessary to meet their students' needs, but, in turn, must be accountable for student learning. In addition to finding new sources of funding for technology, the state needs to redesign its capital improvement process in order to ensure that schools get built as needed to handle enrollment growth.

Californians have the ability — and the desire — to dramatically improve the state's education system. We believe there are few issues that California's leadership and its people will come together on, issues in which they will cease focusing on turf and forget their political and personal differences. ***Vastly improving the opportunity for all children in California to receive the best education possible must be one of those issues.***

INTRODUCTION

At the request of Governor Pete Wilson and other state leaders, the Education Commission of the States (ECS) last year set out to take a fresh and forthright look at California's school system at a crucial point in its history — on the threshold of a new century, facing new demands and new challenges, and under mounting pressure to improve.

ECS was asked to design a plan to build on and connect school-reform efforts already under way in the state, to bring new reform possibilities to the table and to search for common ground among the diverse groups of people working to improve the quality and performance of public education in California.

During the past year, ECS examined the state's education system from a variety of angles and perspectives. We met with legislative leaders, executive-branch officials, other policymakers, state education professionals and school board members. We studied the complex web of federal, state and local laws and regulations that govern the K-12 system. We tracked and analyzed media coverage, and spent time with parents, classroom teachers, business and community leaders, union officials, university administrators and higher education leaders, and social-service providers. We reviewed economic forecasts, census figures, job-market trends, public-opinion polls and student achievement indicators, and studied the recommendations of the several dozen public and private organizations that have issued reports on California's school system in the past 10 years.

The picture that emerged, in many ways, is heartening. Awash in new demands and operating under many financial constraints, California's school system nevertheless not only maintained but also improved its performance and efficiency over the past decade.

Fewer young people dropped out of school, more students went on to college, and the gap in achievement between minority and nonminority youngsters narrowed. In addition, total expenditures for K-12 education increased by $13.2 billion, although the combination of substantial enrollment increases and inflation eroded the purchasing power of these additional funds.

California's public school system is improving ...

Graduation rate

The dropout rate among 10th- to 12th-graders is down 34% since 1986. This represents 30,000 students a year who stay in school to graduate with their class.

Source: California Department of Education, 1994

SAT scores

The percentage of students scoring above 450 on the verbal section of the SAT has risen 11% since 1984, and the percentage scoring above 500 on the math section is up 26%.

Source: California Department of Education, 1994

Advanced courses

The number of high school students taking physics and chemistry has more than doubled since 1983, and the number taking advanced math is up 67%.

Source: California Department of Education, 1994

Minority student achievement

Fewer Latino, black and Asian-American students are dropping out of school — and a higher number are completing accelerated courses and going on to college.

Source: California Department of Higher Education, 1994

System efficiency

California's K-12 system operates with 15% fewer administrators per teacher than it did in 1983, when the school population was smaller (by 1.5 million students) and the school year shorter (by 17 days).

Source: California Department of Education, 1994

Today, every level of the system shows encouraging signs of renewal and reform. Schools and districts are trying new ways of organizing and managing themselves, of teaching and testing students, of reconnecting with the communities they serve. Parents increasingly are taking advantage of opportunities to get involved in their children's education, and neighborhood coalitions, employers, universities, and state and local policymakers are establishing themselves as significant new allies in the schools' struggle to change and improve.

But if California's school system each year has managed to work a little harder, run a little faster, spread itself a little thinner, it appears to be approaching its maximum potential as presently designed. And, as the snapshots on these pages show, the burdens and pressures that have strained the system to its limits over the past few years could combine in the next decade to overwhelm it.

We believe California cannot afford to leave in place a school system ill-equipped to cope with the challenges that lie ahead.

Perceived as highly regulated and centralized, the existing system tends to undercut the sense of partnership, purpose and responsibility at the local level. Rather than setting broad goals, defining needs and serving as a source of ideas and support, the state still plays the role of micromanager and watchdog. Although the state's focus is moving from control to effectiveness, from status quo to innovation, from holding schools accountable for complying with rules and regulations to holding them accountable for what and how well students are learning, more movement in these directions is essential.

In such an environment, even well-conceived reforms remain on the fringes, with little chance of coalescing into a coherent force for change. Small wonder, then, that the ambitious policy initiatives California has undertaken over the past decade have yielded such uneven results.

California's school system must be redesigned, but it cannot be redesigned piecemeal, from the top down. We believe California must commit itself to academic success for *all* students by shifting operating responsibility for improving education quality to the local level, where constructive, lasting change is most likely to occur. This does not mean that the state will turn everything over to the local level and then turn its back; under California's Constitution, the state has significant

... but it is not improving fast enough.

Only a small percentage of California students perform to high academic standards

- The writing skills of three in five California 10th-graders are below a level at which "writing is coherent, organized and developed."
- Nearly one-third of all 10th graders score at a level where "the reader only occasionally recognizes ideas ... and almost never connects those ideas."
- Just 3% of the state's 8th-graders have "advanced" math skills — and nearly half are rated "below basic" in math.

Source: California Learning Assessment System, 1994; National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1993

California employers give recent high school graduates low marks in literacy and other critical job-skill areas.

- Pacific Bell reports that six out of 10 entry-level job applicants flunk tests geared to 7th-grade levels.
- In a recent survey of the state's largest firms, 63% of California employers said that recent high school graduates applying for entry-level jobs "lack a satisfactory education."

Source: Council on California Competitiveness, 1992

Young people who leave school with low-level skills and abilities are no longer easily absorbed into the work force.

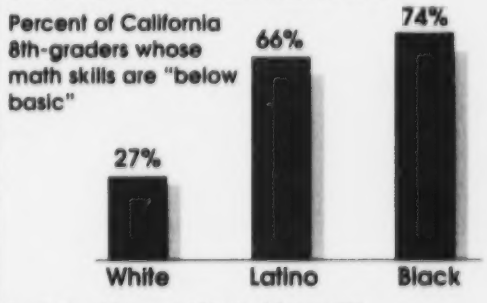
The percentage of jobs in California requiring no post-high school education or training has fallen sharply, from 49% in 1980 to 35% today.

The unemployment rate among the state's 16- to 19-year-olds went from 13% in 1989 to 26% in 1993.

Although the dropout rate has fallen, California remains 42nd in the nation in the percentage of students who graduate. At the current rate, California will add 1.4 million high school dropouts to its population over the next decade.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 1993; Children Now, 1993; Council on California Competitiveness, 1992

Latino and black students continue to score significantly lower than white students on standardized tests.



Source: National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1993

responsibilities with respect to education. The state must take the lead in creating an achievement-oriented system by setting standards and developing assessments by which to gauge attainment of the standards.

The state has taken several steps toward major change, including support for school- and district-based decisionmaking, passage of the Charter Schools Act of 1992 and the enactment of public-school choice, all of which widen educational options for students and parents.

But these steps simply don't go far enough. We believe California's K-12 system must undergo comprehensive decentralization and deregulation, with the traditional *school system* giving way to a dynamic, versatile **system of schools**, each focused squarely on meeting the needs of the community it serves. The objective is to create a sense of **community stewardship:** to restore the crucial connections among families, schools and communities; strengthen their ability to work together; and significantly enlarge their responsibility for improving educational quality and student achievement.

Making the transition to a system based on local control and stewardship will not work, however, without profound changes in the way California schools are regulated, funded and held accountable for results. If the recommendations proposed in this document are to succeed, two things must happen: the political leaders must refrain from addressing education problems in isolation from the big picture by introducing and passing large numbers of small, individual bills, and the state education agency must take on a new role of support.

Nor will the new school system work without a focal point — a clearly defined, widely shared commitment to ensuring that all of California's young people attend safe and orderly schools that focus on achievement, and that they leave school well prepared for living, working and learning in a changing world.

Here, too, California has moved forward. The curriculum frameworks it has developed in math,

---

The fastest-growing segments of California's school-age population are the students who historically have been least successfully served in today's education system.

Off on the wrong foot

According to a statewide survey of kindergarten teachers, one in three California children enters school "not ready to participate successfully," and lacking even such basics as knowing their address or how to tie their shoes.

Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990

Children in poverty

The number of California youngsters living in poverty has increased 66% since 1980. Today, one in four of the state's children lives in poverty — up from one in seven in 1980.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1993

Racial and ethnic diversity

By the year 2000, two in three California students will be Latino, black or Asian-American — up from one in two today. During the same period, the white school-age population will decrease 8%.

Source: California Department of Education, 1993

Language diversity

The percentage of California students with limited proficiency in English has more than doubled in the past 15 years, rising from one in 10 students in 1980 to one in five students today.

Source: California Department of Education, 1993

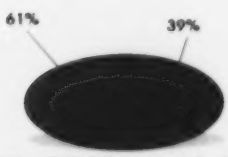
School failure

Poor and minority students are the least likely to thrive academically — and more than twice as likely as nonminority students to:

- Fall behind and have to repeat a grade
- Require remedial instruction
- Drop out of high school
- End up unemployed, on welfare or in jail.

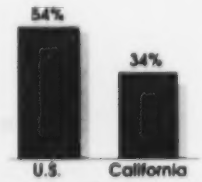
Source: California Department of Education, 1993

Californians are impatient for change, and want proof that the public investment in K-12 education is paying off.



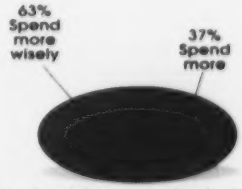
61% of Californians believe the existing public school system "needs a major overhaul."

Source: PACE Poll, 1993



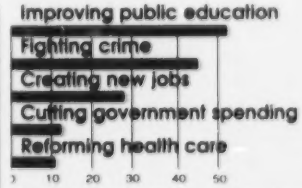
Percentage of people who give the public schools in their community a grade of "A" or "B"

Source: PACE Poll, 1993; Gallup Poll, 1993



63% of Californians think the state should "spend more wisely" on public education, as opposed to "spending more."

Source: Los Angeles Times Poll, 1993



Improving public education tops the list of issues Californians view as critical to the state's future.

Source: California State University/Charlton Research Co., 1993, 1993

science and six other academic areas embody a coherent vision of the skills and knowledge all students are expected to learn and be able to apply.

But we believe California's commitment to higher expectations for students, schools and communities must be strengthened and made more explicit.

We recommend that California create a new **achievement-based system of schools** focused on improving individual and collective student achievement and including a more reliable means of evaluating school, district and overall system performance. This achievement-based system would include a set of standards built around the existing curriculum frameworks and a new system of assessments.

In addition, to make the transition to this new system, the state must shift its management focus from *controlling* schools and districts to *supporting* them. It must direct its energies toward building an adequately and equitably funded education system, one in which teamwork, innovation and effective performance are both recognized and rewarded and in which schools have the resources, tools and incentives they need to transform themselves into safe, stimulating learning environments for California's children.

Finally, for an undertaking of such scope and complexity to succeed, it must be supported by a comprehensive, bipartisan policy and investment plan. Decentralization and deregulation, the implementation of standards and the development of crucial support structures must be carried out in a coordinated fashion.

On the following pages, we offer a set of recommendations which, taken together, provide the framework for a **California Master Plan for Public Education**.

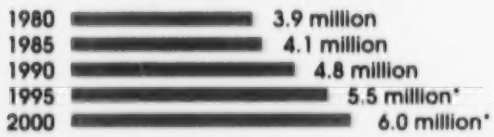
We see the Master Plan as the means for California leaders to move beyond interest-group politics, turf battles and partisan conflicts, and begin restoring the political consensus that produced the important education reforms of the past 10 years and allowed California to achieve success despite increasing challenges. We also see the Master Plan as the path to move beyond some successful policies, programs and schools to a comprehensive system that works for all schools and students. We believe the Master Plan provides an opportunity to build on California's gains and strengthen improvement efforts at every level of the system.

We recommend the Governor, Legislature and Superintendent of Public Instruction appoint a bipartisan

A school system struggling with demands and new challenges ...

California's K-12 system will experience enrollment surges through the end of the decade.

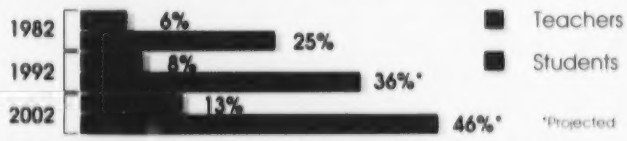
California's K-12 enrollment, 1980-2000



Source: California Department of Education, 1994

The "diversity gap" between the teaching force and the student population continues.

% of students and teachers of Latino heritage



Source: California Department of Education, 1994; California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 1992

Not just in urban areas, but throughout California, schools and other human-service agencies are struggling under the burden of a needier, more troubled school-age population.

Poverty: Over the past 15 years, the number of California children living in poverty has risen from 900,000 to 2.2 million. The poverty rate is particularly high — more than 40% — among black and Latino children.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1993

Teen births: California has experienced a 23% increase in the teen birth rate since 1989. More than 60,000 babies a year are born to mothers under the age of 19. One in eight babies is born with signs of alcohol or drug toxicity.

Source: California Department of Health Services and California Governor's Office, 1993

Youth Violence: California has the second-highest juvenile incarceration rate among the 50 states. Since 1989, there has been a 59% increase in youth homicides. A total of 828 Californians under the age of 20 were murdered in 1991, the equivalent of 27 classrooms of children.

Source: California's Attorney General's Office, 1993

Security costs: Security and safety costs are a new and rapidly growing financial burden for California schools and districts. In the Los Angeles schools, nearly $25 million a year — enough to fund 500 new teaching positions — is spent on metal detectors and other security costs.

Source: Legislative Budget Office, 1994

panel to oversee the design and implementation of the Master Plan for Public Education. Because this panel will bear much of the responsibility for the success or failure of the efforts we propose, its members must be chosen carefully. We suggest the panel have no more than 15 members, representing all sides of the political spectrum, including Legislators and members of the State Board of Education, higher education governing boards, School-to-Career Task Force, business community and other citizens involved and/or interested in education reform. Many other people will participate on task forces working on various parts of this Master Plan; who is chosen to participate will have a huge impact on the success of the efforts.

The Master Plan Panel should begin its work immediately. Assuming California chooses to participate in the federal Goals 2000 initiative, these funds should be used to support staff needs for the Master Plan Panel. We recommend the Goals 2000 oversight group and the Master Plan Panel be one and the same, with the state using the flexibility provided by the federal initiative to design the Master Plan. The panel should have a January 1996 deadline for submitting its proposed Master Plan to the Governor, Superintendent, Legislature, State Board of Education, local school boards and the public.

We envision the Master Plan Panel overseeing the appointment and coordination of work for various task forces established to design and develop specific components of the Master Plan. The panel must work closely with the State Board of Education, the Department of Education and other key partners, drawing the diverse individuals and groups working to improve California's schools into the process — including the higher education community, whose involvement we see as particularly crucial.

While our recommendations focus largely on the K-12 system, it is not enough to fix elementary and secondary schools and overlook changes needed in the higher education system to fit with the changes in K-12 education. Implications for higher education are mentioned in various sections of this report and in the higher education box on page 27.

Many of the tasks outlined in this report are complex and will take several years to complete. A suggested timetable is included in the final section.

... is operating under enormous financial constraints.

Rapid enrollment growth and the recession have combined to drop California's ranking in per-pupil spending relative to other states.

- Over the past decade, total spending for K-12 education has increased by $13.2 billion — but this increase has just barely kept pace with enrollment growth and inflation since 1984-85.
- Other states — less burdened by enrollment growth or recession — have been able to increase their levels of per-pupil spending more rapidly than California. As a result, California's rank among the 50 states in per-pupil spending has dropped from 20th (1984-85) to a projected 37th (1994-95).

- In 1993-94, California's annual per-pupil expenditure of $4,872 was $858 below the national average of $5,730, although its average teacher salary remains among the top 10 in the nation.
- California's classrooms are among the most crowded and its schools rank at or near the bottom rank of the 50 states in:
  - — Students per computer
  - — Students per librarian
  - — Students per school nurse
- Proposition 13 dramatically altered the state-local funding mix: local property taxes currently account for 36% of school funding — down from 60% in 1978.

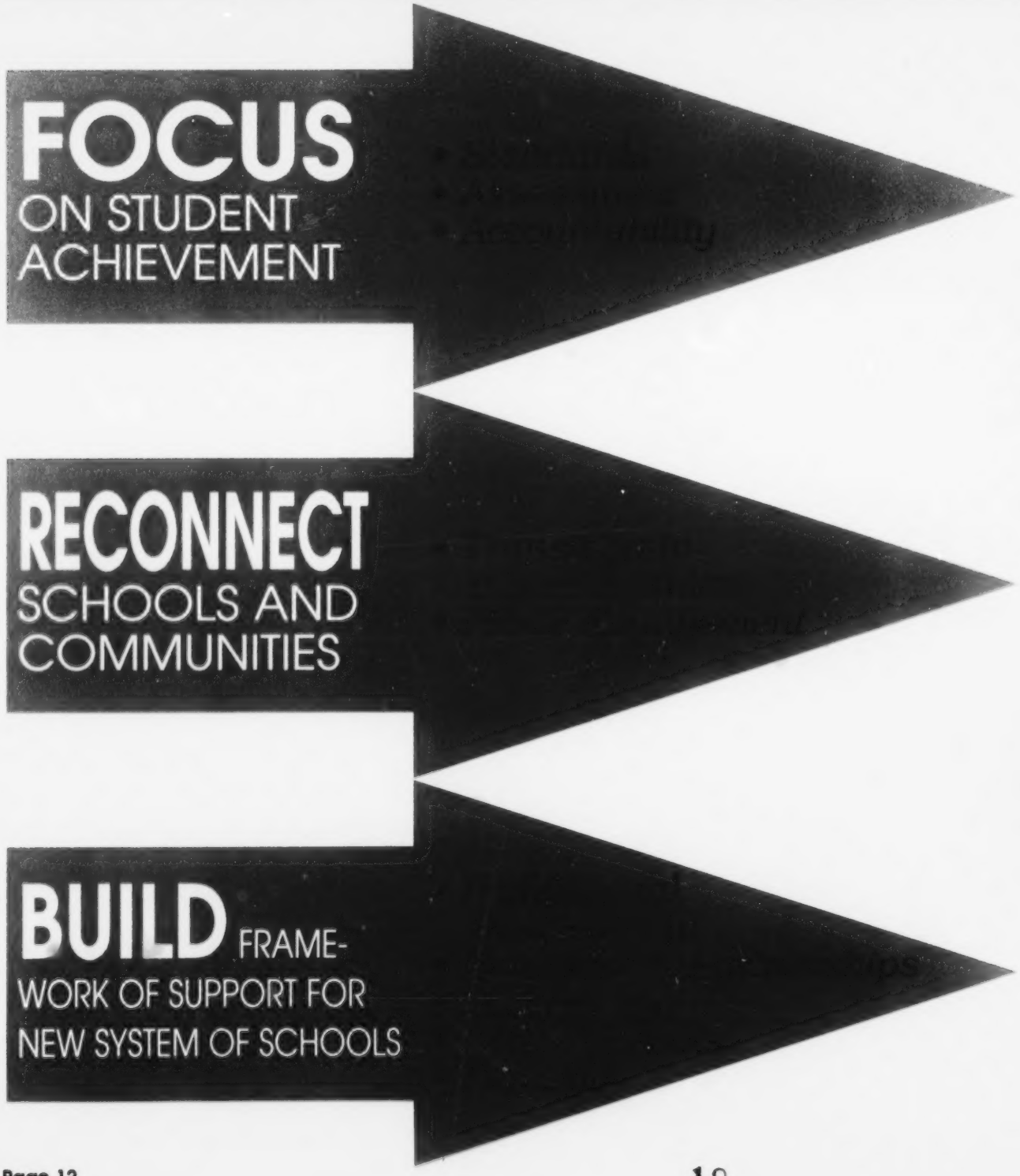
Source: California Department of Education, 1994; Governor's Office for Child Development and Education, 1994; National Education Association, 1994.

We see the Master Plan Panel continuing its work at least through early 1997. Thereafter, the panel should be scaled down, but left in place long enough to ensure sustained leadership through the early and middle stages of implementation. We recommend that the Legislature set up a joint education committee to review the Master Plan when it is complete. In addition, we suggest that the ECS California commissioners' network annually convene key legislators, Governor's staff members, State Board members and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to assess the progress and process of the Master Plan.

Throughout this report are examples of what various entities in California and across the nation are doing to address some of the issues discussed. The efforts to make dramatic changes are by no means limited to those mentioned, and the examples are not intended as recommendations of what California should do; rather, they are included to demonstrate what is being accomplished in various locations.

The recommendations we offer will not solve all of the problems facing California's schools. But we believe they will serve as a useful guide for moving ahead and creating the versatile, efficient and high-performing education system California needs to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

CALIFORNIA MASTER PLAN FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION



FOCUS ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Over the past decade, California has led the nation in efforts to reshape K-12 education around clearer, more challenging expectations for students. What is needed now are clear, high expectations for student achievement (i.e., standards) linked to the curriculum frameworks and tied to a new assessment system.

The curriculum frameworks California developed in math, science, English-language arts, history-social science, foreign language, health, fine arts and physical education embody a coherent vision of the knowledge, skills and abilities all students need in order to leave school well-prepared for the world that awaits them. The frameworks have served as an impetus for change at the local level, providing schools and districts with a focal point for the coordinated redesign of how and what students are taught, and how their learning progress is measured.

But the frameworks' full potential as a catalyst for systemwide improvement is yet to be realized. Among parents, community leaders, employers and the public at large, understanding and acceptance of the new approaches to teaching and learning reflected in the frameworks remain limited. Educators, on the other hand, generally embrace the new ideas, but many teachers lack the training necessary to bring them to life in the classroom. And despite the enormous amount of time and energy California has invested in developing the frameworks over the past 10 years, it has yet to come up with a reliable way of evaluating school and district progress toward implementing them.

Performance Standards

In our view, California first of all must take the curriculum frameworks a step further, establishing statewide standards that clearly define what all students are expected to know and be able to do at certain key points in their schooling. This is the first step toward creating an achievement-based system of schools.

We recommend state education officials take their initial ideas for standards to members of the public, educators, policymakers, business and community leaders, parents, students, higher education officials, home-schooling families, taxpayer groups, etc. These groups should have the opportunity to react to those ideas and have state officials hear what they expect from their schools.

While the state has significant responsibility for education under California's Constitution and final decisions about common standards should rest with the state, standards must be developed with the understanding and involvement of members of local communities. Districts also should have the option to create and incorporate additional standards and assessment strategies needed to meet community expectations.

Setting standards would strengthen and make more explicit California's commitment to ensuring that all youngsters achieve at higher levels — those who are currently at or above average as well as those who now experience the least success in school. In addition, standards would provide California with the means to better monitor and assess school, district and overall

Establish statewide standards for K-12 students.

Design a new statewide assessment system around the new standards.

Develop an accountability process that emphasizes local responsibility for improving student achievement.

system performance, and thus more confidently make the shift to a funding model that recognizes and rewards effort, initiative and improvement.

At the heart of an achievement-based system is the vision of students as active, engaged learners — rather than a passive audience — pitted not so much against one another as against established standards of excellence and mastery. Unlike "factory model" education, an achievement-based system recognizes that children learn at different paces and in different ways; it has as its goal getting as many students as possible over the high bar, not weeding out weaker students and leaving them behind. In addition, schools in which students are actively engaged in learning have reported fewer incidences of disruption and violence.

Shifting to standards requires teachers to broaden their repertoire of instructional skills and strategies, and diversify their methods of evaluating what, and how well, students are learning. They must know how to design tests that challenge students to think critically, make connections and apply what they've learned and, just as important, how to use such tests to measure improvement, diagnose problems promptly and involve parents more actively in assessing their child's learning progress.

Teaching the basics is embedded in teaching to higher standards; contrary to public perception, research shows that teaching higher-order skills such as critical thinking is not incompatible with teaching the basics. Rather, basic skills form the foundation upon which higher skills are learned. Higher standards mean higher expectations — and greater accountability — for everyone involved in the educational process, more closely linking what communities expect of schools, what schools expect of communities, and what both expect of students.

We recommend that the Master Plan Panel, in conjunction with the State Board of Education, oversee the design and development of these statewide standards for K-12 students in math, science, English-language arts, history-social science, foreign language, health, fine arts and physical education.

The new standards should be based primarily, though not exclusively, on the state curriculum frameworks; they must reflect a focus not only on academic skills but also workplace skills. To help ensure that they do, the state's School-to-Career Task Force should be actively involved in developing the standards.

Assessments

Second, the Master Plan Panel should be responsible for coordinating the development of a new statewide assessment system.

In designing the new system, California has the opportunity to build on the work it has already done in the area of statewide assessment, and to draw on an array of other models and prototypes, including the content- and performance-based assessments that have been developed and field-tested by such groups as New Standards and the California Assessment Collaborative; newly revamped commercial tests; and various state-developed models, such as the Vermont Portfolio Assessment System. And, as in the standards-setting process, it is essential that the Master Plan Panel take its ideas for a statewide system of assessment to the public to receive input and feedback.

However California's new statewide assessment program is designed or configured, it must be capable of producing reliable statistical measures of individual and collective student performance, and of school

and district progress toward implementing standards. We believe it is essential that the new assessment system be in place within a year of the adoption of statewide standards.

We strongly recommend, however, that California not create an assessment system in which evaluation of performance is based solely on the state-administered test. The new system should both encourage and accommodate the use of diverse teaching and testing strategies at the local level. It must provide schools and districts with the opportunity to demonstrate their progress toward improving student achievement using the assessment mechanism best suited to their instructional program.

Therefore, we suggest that California supplement, and gradually expand, its statewide assessment program by developing a list of additional content- and performance-based tests deemed effective in evaluating student learning progress. Schools and districts can use the results from these tests to learn from one another and to compare their progress.

Accountability

Finally, we recommend that the Master Plan Panel coordinate the development of a statewide accountability system, the major elements of which are:

- Significant **community involvement** in the planning, monitoring and ongoing evaluation of school and district improvement efforts.
- **Regular reporting** to the public, at both the state and local levels, on school and district progress toward improving educational quality and student achievement. Over time, these reports should include achievement scores by categories of students, such as gender, income level, limited-English proficiency and special needs, to ensure that these students are being well-served.
- **Rewards** for effective performance and **sanctions** for poor performance. Schools and districts that are energized, focused and making measurable progress should be granted greater autonomy and financial control, such as being entitled to retain sa. ngs generated by management innovations. On the other end, schools and districts that are unwilling or unable to move ahead would be subject to sanctions — mild at first but growing harsher if performance fails to improve. The box on page 16 details how Kentucky is using this strategy to improve accountability.

Rewards and Consequences

The 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act required the State Board of Education to establish an accountability system to reward schools that improve, and define consequences for those that do not.

Financial rewards are distributed in the following way:

- The State Board establishes a "threshold" level of improvement for each school.
- Improvement is measured over a two-year period in such areas as student achievement, attendance and dropout rates, grade retention, and the percentage of students going on to college, military service or the workplace.
- Rewards go to schools that meet their improvement goals. In April 1995, Kentucky will distribute more than $26 million in rewards to schools that made the largest gains in performance.

Schools that decline or fail to improve face progressive remedies and sanctions.

- A school that fails to reach its threshold goals must prepare an improvement plan.
- A school that falls in this category after the next assessment is assigned one or more Kentucky Distinguished Educators, who have the authority to make extensive changes in school operation.
- Failure to improve after the third assessment can result in the school's being declared "in crisis." Certified staff are placed on probation, and students' parents are notified of their right to transfer their child to a "successful" school. The Distinguished Educator assigned to the school makes recommendations to the superintendent as to the retention, dismissal or transfer of school staff. This process continues every six months until the State Board determines the school is no longer in crisis.

If an entire district is declared "in crisis," the superintendent and local school board are subject to dismissal, and the district is placed under the management of one or more Kentucky Distinguished Educators assigned by the State Board of Education.

In addition to Kentucky, 20 other states have initiated some form of academic bankruptcy provisions. Although all of them face various challenges, the idea is spreading across the country.

RECONNECT SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

California must build a public education system that relies on local control and stewardship, one in which families, schools and communities view themselves as equal and essential partners in the education process, working together to help all students achieve at higher levels.

If the new K-12 achievement system is to work, educators, parents, business leaders, higher education officials, representatives of taxpayer groups, community members and others must be involved in responding to the new standards.

We envision a process in which California school boards and their superintendents lead the way in developing and putting forward a detailed plan for implementing school-by-school responses to the new statewide standards. On the strength of this plan, districts will be allowed to become independent from the existing system, as charter schools currently do.

The responsibility for determining whether school districts are ready for this transition, of necessity, will rest with the state. But the state's objective must be to encourage and help districts move into the new system, not shut them out.

Nor should the process be rushed: we recommend school districts be given until the 2001-2 school year to make the transition.

In this way, we believe California can decentralize and deregulate its school system gradually but comprehensively, and in the manner most likely to produce constructive, lasting change.

Setting this process in motion, and sustaining its momentum, will be an enormously complex task, requiring ingenuity, foresight and sustained commitment on the part of California leaders.

For the Master Plan Panel, the major areas of focus will be the design and development of a new governance and regulatory framework and a comprehensive strategy for public outreach and engagement.

New Governance Framework

This streamlined regulatory framework, which would govern districts moving into the new system, includes several components.

- School districts should be **challenged to redesign** themselves around the standards and provided with incentives to do so: greater autonomy and freedom from regulation; technical assistance and support; and rewards for initiative, effort and innovation.

  Comprehensive regulatory relief and greater autonomy should be provided in such areas as staffing, planning, budgeting, program design, professional development and facilities management, rather than piecemeal exemptions and waivers from existing rules, laws and policies.

  A set of **"safeguards"** must be included to ensure that equity, safety, fiscal responsibility and other matters of public interest are not compromised. Rather than painstakingly reviewing each item in the current regulatory system and *arguing out* redundant or unnecessary provisions, we recommend starting the new system from scratch, with a process for *arguing in* needed safeguards in such areas as liability, transportation,

Design a new governance framework for the achievement-based system.

Design a process that allows school districts to move from the existing school system into the new system.

Set a 2001-2 school year deadline for all districts to make the transition to the new achievement system.

Raise the cap on the number of charter schools allowed.

Involve the public in decisions about improving the education system.

health standards, employee rights, recordkeeping, the handling of special-needs students and the use of categorical funds. The purpose of these streamlined safeguards is to allow adults working in the education system to keep their focus on student achievement.

- An **application-and-review process** for moving school districts into the new system. The focal point of this process must be the specific goals, commitments and targets that school districts will be held accountable for in terms of improving student achievement.

  We recommend that each district be required to put forward a detailed proposal — what we call an **Enterprise Plan** — for how each of its schools intend to redesign curriculum, instruction, assessment and professional development around the new statewide standards; report progress toward their achievement goals for diverse groups of students; involve parents and community members in decisionmaking; integrate technology into instruction, assessment, school management and networks that link like-minded educators; and use partnerships, networks and other support structures to strengthen improvement efforts.

- An increase in the current cap on **charter schools**. This step is needed to accommodate individual schools that are struggling under the constraints of the existing system but whose district may not be ready for the move to the new achievement-based system.

  We believe the Charter Schools Act of 1992 should be revised to allow the establishment of up to 500 charters, raising the current cap of 100. The responsibility for granting charters should continue to rest with local school districts, although standards and assessment strategies used in charter schools must be consistent with those set statewide.

Public Engagement

Clearly, communicating effectively with the public is an essential part of any and all reform efforts. California leaders must make a concerted and sustained effort to involve citizens in an ongoing discussion about California's present and future education needs. Citizens need to have a clearer sense of what's at stake; they need to understand fully the deficiencies of the existing school system and the consequences of failing to address them.

Long accustomed to making decisions about schooling in isolation, policymakers and educators now must face the fact that many other people expect to be essential partners in the education enterprise. People want information, they want an opportunity to express their concerns and interests, they want to know that their views are being listened to and considered and that their taxes are being used wisely.

We believe that a key component of the California Master Plan is the development of a **public information and outreach plan**. We recommend building on the work of Public Agenda, Children Now and the California Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students, whose recent reports offer a variety of strategies for stimulating public interest, engagement and support. Among the key principles of this plan:

- **Address public concerns about change**. How do we know our current system is falling short? Why are some segments of the student population served less successfully than others? What has been learned over the past decade of reform that can help schools do a better job of educating kids? And what are the consequences of leaving the existing system unchanged?

- **Use innovative strategies to bring people together** to discuss the state's present and future education needs. Include people outside the system, inside the system and those who identify themselves as critics. The public must be given opportunities, such as town hall meetings and interactive media events, to share their views about education with politicians, community leaders, the media and their fellow citizens. In particular, we recommend that a series of regional hearings be held to stimulate public interest and involvement in the Master Plan.
- **Give people choices**. Each choice must stem from a distinct diagnosis of the problem, reflect a core of widely shared values and suggest a specific course of action. The choices available must embrace all legitimate points of view in the debate, including those that are controversial.
- **Work to find common ground**. When educators and policymakers invite others to the table, they must do it sincerely and with the understanding that everyone has something valuable to contribute. The solutions arrived at will reflect diverse thinking and likely will be more effective and lasting than those imposed by one group without the input of other groups.
- **Focus on students.** None of our efforts matter unless they lead to more students achieving at much higher levels.

Safety, Order and "the Basics" — Public Concerns

Although most Americans favor holding students to higher standards of achievement, they don't think standards alone will improve schools. In fact, the public believes this approach to school reform will fail without attention to more bottom-line issues: safety, order and mastery of "the basics," according to a recent report.

Education leaders seeking to engage the public in school improvement will be interested in these findings:

- Most Americans believe too many public schools are not providing the minimum prerequisites — a safe, orderly environment and effective teaching of "the basics." Americans believe schools are so disorderly and undisciplined that learning cannot take place. And their concern about order has been joined by a new fear — that schools are violent and unsafe.

- The public neither understands nor accepts the new teaching methods that often accompany reform. Most Americans view with skepticism approaches such as focusing on math concepts rather than rote learning, eliminating student "tracking" and replacing standardized tests with more "authentic" assessments.

- Americans still trust teachers, principals and school boards to make decisions about how to manage the schools — but their trust is wavering.

- Most Americans are not overly concerned about issues such as sex education and multiculturalism, which have caused acrimonious debate in many communities. However, they do want schools to teach some values, particularly honesty, truthfulness and the importance of being able to live together in harmony.

- Americans believe learning can be fun and interesting and want schools to help children enjoy their education and become more confident and self-assured.

(*First Things First: What Americans Expect From the Public Schools*, Public Agenda, 1994)

BUILD A FRAMEWORK OF SUPPORT FOR THE NEW SYSTEM OF SCHOOLS

The first two components of our recommended agenda for California are aimed at focusing systemwide reform and giving it a grassroots base of action. The third component is the development of a stronger infrastructure of support for reform, including:

- ✔ **Improve the Education and Training of School Staff Members.** It is critical that teachers, administrators and others who connect with students on a daily basis receive top-notch, relevant training as they prepare to work in schools and throughout their career. School staffs should have more flexibility and autonomy in planning how to improve student achievement. In turn, they will be held accountable for student performance. This new accountability and the tough changes proposed in this report require new skills for virtually every staff member.
- ✔ **Identify and Strengthen Networks, Partnerships and Other Support Structures.** The Master Plan should promote and nurture partnership-building — within the K-12 system, between the K-12 and postsecondary systems, between public education and other human-service systems, and between the education system and business community. It should encourage connecting people and providing them with links to education reform information and ideas.
- ✔ **Expand Technological Capacity.** Leadership is needed to develop an action plan that will improve California's educational technology capacity. We view technology as essential in capturing the interest of students in how and what they learn; increasing the organizational and instructional leadership skills of teachers, administrators and others; providing greater access to local, regional and statewide school-reform networks; and preparing students for the workplace.
- ✔ **Attend to the Special Needs of Urban Schools and Districts.** In many urban areas, everyday issues are overwhelming — poverty, violence, cultural differences, broken families, overcrowding, turf wars, patronage. State leaders must address these obstacles by raising expectations for student achievement in urban areas, where cynicism is high and expectations are low. In addition, they need to look at strengthening school-community ties; granting decisionmaking and budget authority to schools; and coordinating education, health and social services.
- ✔ **Provide an Adequately and Equitably Funded Education System.** Current state funding of schools in California is largely unrelated to improving student achievement. In addition, a downturn in the state's economy over the past few years has eroded schools' purchasing power. To address these and other funding issues, we recommend that the Master Plan Panel find ways to give schools and districts more control over raising and spending money; tie school finance to student achievement; identify new ways to fund capital improvements; focus dollars to be spent

WYOMING
Preparation of Educators

The University of Wyoming has made major changes in its teacher education program, including:

- Sophomore and junior education majors spend time in schools.
- The 12-week student residency was increased to 16 weeks.
- Teacher trainees are exposed to all levels of the education system, not just the level they think they want to teach.

The State Department of Education reports that, as a result, fewer students fail than in the past, and says teachers trained under this program are better equipped to succeed.

Wyoming also is moving toward a competency-based certification process, including the use of portfolios to evaluate teachers.

on professional development; invest in technology; and take advantage of federal initiatives that provide support and flexibility for state school reform efforts.

✔ Improve the Education and Training of School Staff Members

Creating a new system of schools will not occur unless people who work in the schools acquire the skills and knowledge they need to work in a new teaching and learning environment. How well teachers, administrators, aides and other people working in schools are prepared to work with students; how much support, guidance and relevant training they receive; and how well they are able to apply their training and knowledge to help all students are critical to improving the education system. Without effective school staff members who can motivate students to learn and grow, reform efforts will be severely limited in their capacity to bring about real change.

Several issues affect how well school staff perform in the classroom and/or school, among them the quality of education they receive in state colleges or universities, the types and quality of professional development opportunities, and the flexibility provided in collective bargaining contracts and tenure laws.

Insist the K-12 and Postsecondary Systems Work Together To Redesign the Preparation of Educators

Most teacher and administrator education programs do not currently produce graduates able to work in different school environments, contribute to a school-based planning and accountability system, participate in continuing personal and school renewal programs, and help all types of students achieve.

If K-12 education is to improve dramatically, California's colleges and universities must be sure that the teachers and administrators they train are prepared to work in schools that are part of the new achievement system. To ensure that teachers and administrators understand the statewide standards and assessment systems and know how to help *all* students reach these standards, the state should continue moving toward a competency-based certification system. Such a system would define the skills, knowledge and abilities expected of current and future educators when they enter the school door. Evaluation and advancement of teachers would be based on demonstrated teaching ability, subject-area knowledge and contribution to the design and implementation of the school's component of a district's Enterprise Plan.

Schools and districts would serve as the training grounds in which teacher and administrator education (and professional development) are reinvented. Prospective teachers would have the opportunity to learn in environments that encourage creativity, enlightened practice and a sense of collective purpose. Student teachers would benefit from the chance to serve a year-long apprenticeship in one or two schools, supervised by a team of experienced mentors. The state already has begun this process in its review of teacher credentialing.

Decentralize Professional Development to the School and District Levels

In FY 1994-95, California spent around $106 million of state funds on professional development — the ongoing education of teachers, principals and superintendents to help them continue to grow, learn new skills and thereby improve student learning. Federal and district funds add considerably more money to the pot, as do out-of-pocket teacher and administrator expenditures. However, too little of the time and money spent on professional development in California is aligned with improving student learning or the way schools operate.

Because many schools lack a vision of what is needed to achieve student success, many educators lack direction in their selection of professional development activities. Learning opportunities directly related to improving student achievement often are not an important part of the culture at most schools. Many professional development programs mandated by the district are developed with little teacher input and feel to teachers like "one size" should fit all.

Even when educators decide to avail themselves of professional development opportunities on their own, they receive little or no guidance from their school as to what courses would help improve their teaching. The courses available at local universities are designed so far in advance, and so far away from local schools, that they often do not provide what individual teachers need to better serve their students.

Staff Development in California

A study of staff development in California found the state lacks a comprehensive or consistent policy for meeting the continuing professional-growth needs of teachers and administrators.

Among the key findings:

- Direct spending in professional development programs for teachers and administrators constitutes about 1.8% of the state's annual education funds.
- An additional investment is the financial obligation for salary increases that teachers receive by accumulating college course credits.
- For every dollar spent on professional development, teachers contribute 60 cents in uncompensated time.
- Most professional development programs are designed and administered at the district level.
- Professional development resources are used in ways that generally reinforce traditional teaching methods and school structures.
- Professional development rarely is evaluated in terms of its effects on teachers and students.

(*Staff Development in California*; Little, Gerritz, Stern, Guthrie, Kirst and March; Policy Analysis for California Education, 1987)

WASHINGTON Professional Development

Washington is expanding professional growth opportunities for school staff members.

In some districts, all school employees are eligible for retraining and professional development programs, not just teachers.

For example, in Edmonds, teachers, bus drivers, cooks and other support personnel recently attended a conference on year-round schooling.

And in Seattle, teachers may work on master's degrees at the school site. Seattle City University offers courses at a reduced rate, and many teachers develop their own course of study.

The use of professional development funds needs to be examined to determine if California is getting effective professional development for its investment. California must give teachers, administrators and other staff the skills and support they need to transform their schools into environments where teamwork, initiative and innovation are promoted and used to improve individual and collective performance.

Five Key Principles of Effective Professional Development

A recent report that studied professional development in eight states offered the following principles for redesigning teacher-development programs:

- **Effective professional development is school based.** Teachers must be involved in the design and implementation of their own professional development activities.
- **Effective professional development uses coaching and other follow-up procedures.** Coaching by experts and peers gives teachers the opportunity to observe one another and provide feedback and support, and has a lasting effect on teachers' behavior in the classroom.
- **Effective professional development is collaborative.** Collegial networks across the district, state or nation allow teachers to work together to improve teaching and learning.
- **Effective professional development is embedded in the daily lives of teachers.** Continuous learning opportunities must be part of teachers' everyday lives and part of every school's institutional priorities.
- **Effective professional development focuses on student learning and is evaluated at least in part on that basis.** Unless student learning improves, professional development cannot be considered a complete success.

(*Professional Development and Teacher Time*, Indiana Education Policy Center, Indiana University, November 1994)

Equally important is the opportunity to work with peers. Educators who can decide with their colleagues what types of professional development opportunities the individual or group needs are likely to be more effective in working with one another and students. Educators who work in isolation tend to stick with methods they are used to — even if those methods do not work very well.

The lack of telephones, computer links and opportunities to network with peers further isolates teachers and other staff and limits their ability to learn and grow. An environment of collegiality and adequate time to communicate with peers about where the school is headed makes a tremendous difference in how educators respond to their students and in how students achieve. School board members, too, must be included in and

provided with professional development opportunities. As site-based decisionmaking becomes more commonplace, local board members must be trained to work more as a resource to and supporter of schools and less as a supervisory body.

How to improve teaching and learning through professional development must be a continuous activity within schools, districts and communities; it is not something that can be learned in an occasional workshop. In the end, no course or training session can compare with teachers, administrators and other school staff regularly sitting down together to share ideas and problems, discuss new ways of doing things and evaluate results on an ongoing basis. The regionally based California Subject Matter Projects, for example, have been successful in creating such communities of discourse.

We recommend that the Master Plan Panel look at specific ways to improve and expand professional development opportunities shown to improve student learning. California's School Personnel, Staff Development and Resource Center law, Chapter 3.1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Code, moves the state toward achieving this goal. By calling for professional development to be designed by teachers, administrators and other staff who work with students, the legislation already has put in place the essential step — shifting such decisions to the school.

The new achievement system will strengthen the legislation by ensuring that teachers, administrators and other people involved in the school decide how their school will achieve locally established goals and priorities. This vision will help them select professional development activities.

Further, the panel should build on the accomplishments that resulted from the 1987 staff development study previously mentioned. These activities include the California Subject Matter Projects, Regional Resource Centers, California School Leadership Academy and the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment Program.

Each district moving to the new achievement system must include in its Enterprise Plan a list of school-level professional development needs, a strategy for meeting future professional development needs and specifics on how teachers, administrators and staff will share what they learn with others. Teachers will need professional development focused on implementing new state standards, curriculum frameworks and assessments. Assistance from networks and partnerships, especially partnerships with the higher education community, can help staff glean new ideas about improving student learning.

To help teachers get the professional development they need, the Master Plan Panel should review, evaluate and catalogue groups offering professional development, including universities and county boards, among others. This list would be part of the "Inventory of Networks, Partnerships and Other Support Structures" (as noted in the Networks and Partnerships section). Educators would not be limited to choosing from this list, but could use it as a guide to availability and quality of programs.

We also recommend that the Master Plan Panel include a strategy for dealing with the growing linguistic and cultural diversity of the state's school-age population. Like educator preparation programs, professional development opportunities should provide all teachers — not just a small cadre of bilingual teachers — with training in teaching children from diverse cultural backgrounds.

CALIFORNIA Cooperative Labor Relations

The California Foundation for Improvement of Employer-Employee Relations brings together key decisionmakers in school districts to learn new approaches to negotiations, problem-solving and communication.

The goal is to improve working relationships and help participants function more effectively as a team.

The plan also should provide for new ways to recruit more minority candidates into teaching, bring in professionals who want to teach as a second career and reassign teachers into areas of shortage. Broadening opportunities to bring people from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds and careers into the teaching profession will enlarge California's supply of quality teachers. Pilot programs on the California State University and University of California campuses, for example, have successfully done this with paraprofessionals, whose ranks closely reflect the ethnic and social diversity of students. The California New Teacher Project also has been successful in recruiting people with diverse backgrounds and career experiences and preparing them to enter the teaching profession.

Build Greater Flexibility into the Collective Bargaining Process

School staffs need the flexibility to decide for themselves how to put into place their plan for enhancing student achievement. They should have the authority to change work rules and working agreements if needed. As noted throughout this report, school staffs will be held more accountable for student learning as they are given more flexibility and authority to decide what their schools need. We believe this increased accountability will require teachers and administrators to perform at high levels, resulting in school staffs policing themselves. How this will happen should be part of a district's Enterprise Plan. To make school-based decisionmaking more effective, collective bargaining agreements need to provide more flexibility and autonomy for school staffs.

Higher Education Critical to Improving K-12 Education

Guided by the California Master Plan for Higher Education, the state has made tremendous progress over the past three decades in improving its colleges and universities.

But California's changing economy, the increasing diversity of its population and the move to an achievement-based K-12 system dictate that state leaders take an in-depth look at a number of key postsecondary education issues. Some of those issues — education and professional development of teachers and administrators, and school-college collaboration — are discussed elsewhere in this report. Other key issues state leaders need to address include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Higher education admissions policies and other critical links between the K-12 and postsecondary systems.** To link with proposed K-12 reforms, California colleges and universities need to move away from the current emphasis on grade-point averages and SAT/ACT scores and accommodate new methods of assessing student learning, such as competency-based portfolios, exhibitions and other "authentic" assessments. California needs to ensure that admissions policies reflect new standards and competencies set for students and that students who learn in ways not reflected by SATs and grade averages have opportunities for a postsecondary education.

- **The overall quality, efficiency and accessibility of the higher education system.** The Governor has proposed a change in budgeting strategy that could improve quality in two major university systems: California State University and the University of California. He has called for a four-year compact between the state and the university systems to create budget stability and renew the state's investment in higher education. The proposal calls for reversing some of the financial losses the institutions have suffered in turn for a renewed commitment to teaching, greater productivity and provision of classes that will enable students to achieve degrees in less time.

OHIO Business Involvement

When voters defeated a tax levy increase in 1990, the Cincinnati Business Committee conducted a performance audit of the school system and recommended improvements.

The committee suggested ways to increase central office efficiency, improve communications between schools and the central office, and improve teacher training.

Appointment of a new superintendent paved the way for a three-way partnership among the district, the business community and the teachers' union.

The result: the central office was reorganized, and greater authority given to schools; a pilot "cluster district" was established to test new reform ideas; and a professional development academy opened.

✔ Identify Networks, Partnerships and Other Support Structures

As California leaders struggle to balance "top-down" and "bottom-up" policy approaches, they must not lose sight of the fact that reform is also a horizontal process: good ideas flow across the system from school to school, person to person, and community to community.

To date, many decisions about what reform efforts to undertake have been made centrally, either statewide or districtwide. For example, California adopted a statewide bilingual education program that prescribed certain strategies when alternative strategies would have been more appropriate in some communities. And well-intentioned reform efforts have died because parents were not brought in until decisions already were made.

This lack of communication and understanding between the state and districts and between districts and school communities has increased skepticism by parents, professionals and the larger community about state officials' ability to make appropriate decisions about what is needed in a given community or for a given group of students.

Efforts to increase local control have proved difficult, however. Teachers, parents, administrators, students, policymakers, businesspeople and other citizens struggle to find information about what is and is not working in the education system. When they get the data, many people do not think about sharing it or find it hard to do across the system. As a result, new education reform efforts that could help students achieve don't take hold or don't last. For example, changes advocated by a school principal may collapse if the principal leaves the school and the rest of the community was not part of the process.

If school improvement is to succeed and continue, there must be better information, greater access to information and more involvement in school improvement efforts by parents, students, employers, service providers and other key players at the local level, and between the local and state levels.

Inventory Networks and Partnerships

Expanding partnerships and networks that link teachers to teachers, schools to schools, schools to communities and schools to other organizations are essential if proposed reforms are to succeed.

We recommend the Master Plan Panel, in conjunction with the State Department of Education, take a close look at and develop an inventory of networks and partnerships working on education reform and other related issues. These include networks of teachers, schools, districts and postsecondary institutions focusing on such areas as student assessment, curriculum design, school restructuring, teacher preparation, professional development, technology-based education and school management.

Other networks worth examining include those focused on specific subject areas, such as math, and innovative reform ideas both inside and outside the state, such as California's elementary, middle and high school networks, and the network of recipients of SB1274 school reform grants. Examples of networks outside the state include the New American Schools Development Corporation designs, Accelerated Schools and many others.

These networks link people interested in similar reform strategies and provide a wealth of information and support. They also can provide school officials and community members information about the latest

thinking on such issues as standards, curriculum and evidence that reform works, and support schools trying to reform.

The Master Plan Panel also should look at partnerships between higher education institutions and local K-12 schools and districts. A growing number of these partnerships in California and nationwide are playing a key role in education reform by changing both K-12 and higher education. They tend to be characterized by sharing facilities, faculties and responsibilities for goal-setting, budgeting and planning, and by awarding dual high school/college credits. The Master Plan Panel should encourage these types of partnerships as a strategy for linking higher education and K-12 reforms.

Finally, the panel should review existing partnerships involving schools and businesses, as well as partnerships that involve people from various agencies that serve children and families, such as health, education and social services (see "Work Cooperatively Across Agencies" and "Link Businesses to Reform Efforts" in this section).

Expand Access to Networks and Partnerships

Once the inventory of the various partnerships and networks is compiled, the Master Plan Panel should review each network's capacity to assist and expand the number of schools served and respond to needs outlined in Enterprise Plans. It then should make the inventory — including information about what works and why — widely available to schools, health and social service agencies, community organizations, the business community, postsecondary institutions and others.

This list can serve as a guide to what is available and provide models for additional partnerships and networks. The information should be regularly updated and made available in printed and electronic formats and through state, regional and local meetings.

The Master Plan Panel should develop an array of incentives and recommend that schools and districts participate in at least one such partnership or effort as part of their Enterprise Plan.

Work Cooperatively Across Agencies

Working across agencies is even more difficult than sharing ideas across the education system. Inflexible, one-size-fits-all regulations that make it hard for various agencies to work cooperatively for the sake of children must be removed. When education, health and social service agency personnel work in isolation, duplication and waste result, and children and families go unserved because there is no one agency or person responsible for looking after their needs.

An emerging role for pupil support personnel working in schools — psychologists, nurses, counselors, etc. — is to manage the relationships and connections among related agencies that deal with children and families in their schools.

We recommend that the Master Plan Panel review the recent reports of Children Now, the California Congress of Parents, Teachers and Students, and California Tomorrow, which offer a variety of strategies for rebuilding family-school-community connections.

In addition, the Governor should strongly encourage the directors of state agencies serving children and families to actively participate in and build on existing partnerships, such as the California Partnerships for Comprehensive, Integrated School-Linked Services. In turn, participating

NORTH CAROLINA School-Community Partnerships

Over the past two years, the North Carolina legislature has passed a number of initiatives to strengthen the ability of schools and communities to work together to create safer schools. These initiatives provide more than $25 million to:

- Assist community-based programs that provide after-school activities for at-risk youth
- Establish family resource centers that coordinate services for children and families
- Support programs that encourage families, schools and communities to work together to improve school safety
- Hire additional school counselors, social workers and psychologists, and reduce class size.

agencies should empower their staffs to take part in local discussions in order to form more effective local partnerships that address the needs of specific communities.

The state also should explore ways to expand participation in programs such as Healthy Start and MediCal Reimbursement.

Local- and state-level agencies and organizations not part of existing partnerships should be inventoried to see what services they provide and what duplication occurs across agencies and sites. Those agencies and organizations should be encouraged and assisted to form new or join existing partnerships in order to serve citizens more efficiently and use taxpayers' money wisely.

Several existing efforts at the state and local levels, including the Healthy Start program and the work supported by AB 1741, allow selected counties to blend state funds across categorical lines. Under these programs, school districts have more flexibility in how and when they use pupil-services professionals and are able to provide multiple services at one location. This flexibility allows schools to better tailor services to meet the needs of children and families.

In conjunction with this, the Master Plan Panel should consider submitting a proposal to federal agencies that serve the needs of children — such as the Health and Human Services, Education and Labor Departments — and seek permission to blend federal funds across categorical lines as necessary to address the many needs of children, families and communities.

Link Businesses to Reform Efforts

Business partnerships today are moving beyond supporting school and district projects and programs to focusing on changing teaching and learning environments and redesigning district and state systems. The goal is to enhance student achievement and to link education reform to workforce preparation.

Examples of this generation of business partnerships include the California Business Roundtable, the work involving the Los Angeles Educational Partnership and the Los Angeles Educational Alliance for Restructuring Now, and the local workforce partnerships that resulted from the Industry Education Council of California project. Schools and districts need to build on such partnerships to benefit from their expertise and to ensure that business representatives are included in efforts to better prepare students for the workforce.

✔ Expand the Education System's Technological Capacity

Over the past decade, considerable attention has been paid to improving the technological capacity of California schools, including efforts to develop a statewide technology master plan. The urgency and importance of integrating technology into the state's public education system has been pointed out in recent studies and reports from such groups as the California Business Roundtable, the Council on California Competitiveness, the California Teachers' Association and the State Workforce Literacy Task Force.

However, implementation efforts have been disconnected, unfocused and hampered by a lack of funding. In fact, among the 50 states, California ranks near the bottom in the ratio of computers to students, and most of the state's schools are not even wired to accommodate state-of-the-art technology, such as high-speed Internet links and video teleconferencing capabilities.

In addition to insufficient resources, the lack of incentives and support foi teachers to become knowledgeable about and comfortable with technology poses a major roadblock. Technology simply is not part of the culture of most schools.

Yet many of today's students are interested in and skilled at various forms of technology. Without technology available in classrooms, students often don't see the education they receive as interesting or relevant. And with today's workplace becoming increasingly high-tech, schools that don't keep up with technological developments are not adequately preparing students for the workplace.

Various technologies — computer-based, video and teleconferencing — have the potential to improve school management, increase teacher productivity and, in a school system struggling with rapid enrollment growth, provide students with more individualized learning opportunities and a small-class environment. In addition, technology-based networks have the potential to accelerate systemwide reform by linking innovative schools and practitioners at all levels of the education system.

Executive Leadership Needed

We believe the issue of education technology has been studied sufficiently in California. What is needed now is executive leadership in order to move forward. Therefore, we recommend that the Governor and Superintendent of Public Instruction jointly undertake a review of all the major technology initiatives and implementation strategies on the table, including the recent report of the Education Infrastructure Funding Forum. They should develop a specific action plan to be submitted to the Legislature and local school boards. In this instance, we believe it is more appropriate for the Governor and Superintendent to take on this task than the Master Plan Panel since multiple state agencies could be involved.

Some of the major issues the Governor and Superintendent need to address in this plan include:

- **Expanding training opportunities for teachers, administrators and other staff.** Such opportunities would ensure that all school staff can use computer-based technology effectively and integrate it into curriculum, instruction, communications and management. Some safeguards should be put in place to ensure that these programs focus on how to use technology

National Mathline

Twenty public television stations, including two in Los Angeles, are participating in MATHLINE, a new service aimed at improving middle-school math teachers' professional skills and students' math achievement.

The first phase of MATHLINE, initiated in fall 1994 by the Public Broadcasting Service, has three components:

- A series of 25 videos to help math teachers broaden their teaching skills and strategies
- Two national teleconferences for teachers
- An on-line network linking teachers with a master teacher.

MATHLINE is being developed in cooperation with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, with support from the Carnegie Corporation and the AT&T Foundation.

CALIFORNIA Technology Infrastructure

Pacific Bell has committed $100 million over the next two years to wire 8,600 California schools, libraries and community colleges for high-speed video, voice and data transmission.

The company has challenged other businesses to contribute.

In addition, the California Public Utilities Commission recently set aside $37 million from a rate-payer settlement to strengthen educational technology and telecommunications infrastructure in public schools.

to improve administrative functions and teaching and learning practices — not as a fancier means to achieve the same end or as expensive add-ons to the old-style classroom.

- **Developing funding sources.** New strategies should include federal funds, utility surcharges and/or a statewide bond issue, and the creation of public/private partnerships (leveraging the offers recently made by Pacific Bell, GTE and other major corporations). A component of the federal Goals 2000 legislation provides funding for state technology planning. Last year, the California Education Summit called for stepped-up efforts to develop funding sources other than the state budget to begin building a technology infrastructure for public education, and we agree that the state should move ahead on this.
- **Distributing technology funds in new ways.** These include such means as matching state grants for school-, district- and community-based technology implementation efforts once schools and districts have moved into the new achievement system. Funding priority should be given to proposals that focus on integrating technology into curriculum, instruction and professional development; strengthening links to higher education; and expanding access to existing grade-level, subject-area and whole-school restructuring networks. In addition, technical support and coaching should be made available to schools and districts to help them develop their proposals.

✔ Restore the Strength and Vitality of Urban Schools

California must give special attention to urban school districts, where the need for change and improvement is particularly urgent. Urban school districts provide some of the state's greatest challenges — their populations are most culturally, linguistically and economically diverse; needs are most pressing; and politics most intense. In addition, the sheer size of most urban districts prohibits central offices from being responsive to individual schools. In fact, many urban districts have come to represent the traditional system at its most difficult.

Urban schools face considerable barriers in helping a troubled and needy population. Most urban schools are cut off from their states and often from the communities they serve. Middle-class families are fleeing to the suburbs. Urban/rural/suburban interests are polarized in the Legislature, minority parents are alienated, and community involvement difficult to obtain. The sheer size and complexity of the problems all add up to make schools such as those in Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco and San Diego even more isolated from one another than schools in other districts.

The organization, structure and operational style of most urban school districts make it impossible for classroom successes to become the rule rather than the exception. Urban school reform is often constrained and thwarted by district bureaucracy, collective bargaining, patronage and a choking maze of legal and regulatory constraints. By and large, policies in California's urban districts, like those in many urban areas across the country, are driven by the needs of adults who work in the system, not by academic priorities and the needs of students.

In addition, most urban schools hold low expectations for students. Many policymakers and citizens say they are losing hope for urban students and the public schools they attend. They are not sure these students can learn; they are not confident these teachers can teach; they do not believe urban school systems can change thoroughly enough or fast enough to turn the situation around. As less is expected, less is achieved. As less is achieved, cynicism deepens about whether poor, minority children can achieve at high levels and whether schools full of such children can perform at high levels.

The increasing violence among our young people tells us every day that many urban students are not getting what they need to help them become productive citizens. Each urban youth who commits an act of violence is another person who threatens the very core of our country and our states. If California's urban schools do not improve dramatically, California's financial future will continue to decline as these young people drain the state's social welfare systems and give nothing back in return.

Such problems were recognized in the final report of the 1994 California Education Summit. The report noted "a compelling need to target resources and initiatives in schools and communities with large concentrations of at-risk students." The adverse conditions in which so many urban children grow up must be acknowledged as significant barriers to learning, the report said, "but they should not be used to excuse inadequate instructional programs. California must be committed to quality education for all of its children."

CALIFORNIA School Safety

Only 2-3% of California educators report a "very big" violence problem in their schools, according to a November 1994 report. However, incidents involving less serious forms of violence, such as bullying or pushing, occur frequently.

Crime rates in California schools have fluctuated over the past several years. Property crimes, substance abuse, sex offenses and theft have decreased, but weapons possession, menacing and assaults have increased, the report said.

(*Creating Caring Relationships to Foster Academic Excellence*, California Commission on School Credentialing advisory panel on school violence)

CALIFORNIA District Restructuring

San Diego is working to establish "school clusters" as the primary unit of education change and improvement.

Each cluster consists of a senior high school and its feeder elementary and middle schools.

Cluster schools share resources, plan professional development opportunities and work together to ensure students have a smooth transition from one school to another.

We know that urban schools can be turned around and that they, in turn, can turn around the lives of young people. We know that young people who are actively involved in their schools succeed and do not commit the crimes that we read of so often.

Appoint a Special Urban Education Task Force

To address the unique problems of urban schools, we recommend that the Governor and Legislature, in conjunction with the State Superintendent, appoint an urban education task force to develop a comprehensive strategy for restoring the strength and vitality of urban schools. We are suggesting a special task force because the problems of urban schools are too severe for the Master Plan Panel alone to address in addition to the other proposals in this report. This task force should include representatives of the Master Plan Panel, the School-To-Career Task Force and others involved in improving urban education.

The task force should build on the work begun by the Assembly Select Committee on Urban Education Quality in considering how the state can work with urban schools to build a policy environment that encourages the spread of successful strategies and greater collaboration among service providers in urban areas. Programs such as San Francisco's School Improvement Program, for example, and San Francisco State University's Step-to-College/Mission-to-College program integrate an academic focus with broader community supports.

School-community collaborations that provide each student with an adult mentor and/or advocate (parent, teacher, pupil-services professional, Big Brother/Sister) also have proved to be effective. Organizations such as One to One and Cities in Schools allow families, schools and communities to work together to create a web of activities to connect young people to one another, to adult role models and to their neighborhoods. The challenge is to make these opportunities widely available throughout the state in order to serve a greater number of urban young people.

Raise Expectations for Student Achievement

One issue the task force must address is how to raise expectations for student achievement in urban schools. Urban school systems must have expectations at least as high as any other school district's. Development of state standards and an assessment system tied to those standards are the first steps in raising expectations for urban schools. Another critical component is bringing urban schools into the proposed achievement system, where the focus is on higher student achievement. A third component is making sure higher expectations for urban schools are part of the state's public engagement effort.

Create Incentives for Urban Districts To Restructure and Decentralize

Moving into the new achievement-based system is critical for urban schools. Increased flexibility and reduced supervision will allow them to start with a clean slate in making decisions for their young people. Urban schools above all others need flexibility in collective bargaining agreements to give staff opportunities to redesign their working conditions as needed. It is also critical for urban schools to join existing networks or form new ones that can provide the support and encouragement they need.

The Master Plan Panel should ask the State Board of Education to define for the state, and particularly for the work of the task force, what a large urban district is. Schools in these districts then should be allowed to work together to create an Enterprise Plan for moving as a cluster into the new achievement system. (Smaller districts will have to move as entire districts.)

Urban schools or groups of schools also should be encouraged to work together in new ways that enable them to better meet the academic needs of their students. This includes consideration of such alternative organizational structures as "feeder patterns," "pathways," "learning zones" and "clusters," in which school staffs with like-minded approaches or strategies work together to create a consistent learning environment and support one another. Los Angeles is an example of an urban district working to implement such a cluster strategy.

Strengthen the Ability of Families and Communities To Work Together on Behalf of Children

This redesign of district structure and organization cannot be accomplished without some decisionmaking and budget authority granted to schools. School-based governance groups should include administrators, teachers, pupil-service professionals, non-certified staff, parents, students and community members. This group should have the authority to shape a coherent teaching and learning environment for students, including joining whatever networks and/or partnerships they believe will help them meet students' needs. In order to carry out their responsibilities, the group needs adequate and understandable information on such topics as curriculum issues, school designs, state and district standards, and opportunities for cross-agency collaboration.

In addition, the group should have the authority to use a greater portion of the funds flowing to the school for investing in staff development and other school priorities (see the professional development portion of the section, "Build a Framework of Support for the New System of Schools.") The Cross-City Campaign for Urban School Reform has found that shifting decisions in personnel, professional development, funding, purchasing, and teaching and learning to individual schools puts the school in the driver's seat and transforms central offices into service-oriented organizations.

Coordinate Education, Social, Health and Other Services

Although dozens of programs provide a variety of services to young people and their families, many families and children still fall through the cracks. The situation is particularly true in large cities where the enormous number of administrative procedures, eligibility and record-keeping requirements result in a fragmented system. A coordinated effort is needed to bring together knowledge of what works, policies that create incentives for improvement and political skills to get different organizations working together for the benefit of young people.

Change Spending Patterns to Raise Achievement

School finance expert Allan Odden is among reformers who say a new approach to funding and resource allocation is needed if student performance is to improve.

"The message is not that money doesn't matter. The message is that the way money is used matters," he says.

Odden has identified several strategic investment areas, including:

- Providing prevention rather than remedial programs
- Rewarding teachers' competencies and knowledge rather than only training and exprience
- Tutoring one-on-one rather than reducing class size
- Creating small, personal schools rather than large, impersonal schools
- Providing a strong academic curriculum rather than lengthening the school day or year.

(*Finance Brief*, Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1994)

✔ Provide an Adequately and Equitably Funded Education System

Although funding comes last in this section, by no means do we consider it a less important issue. This section is last because we believe funding decisions must come after decisions about what students need. In California and across the country, public school funding formulas often fail to support those changes necessary to promote higher student achievement. In order to support the new achievement-based system, the funding system in California must change.

Over the past decade, tough economic times and surging enrollments have resulted in levels of per-pupil education funding that barely have kept pace with inflation. During the same period, a dramatic increase occurred in the number of students and in the proportion of students who come from poor families or have limited English-speaking skills. This combination of increased demands and limited resources has severely strained the capacity of the state's education system to meet the needs of all students.

Even though California leaders anticipate an upturn in the state's economy, new dollars available for education will be needed to accommodate increasing enrollment. An economic change for the better must be accompanied by a thorough assessment of funding strategy.

Leaders at state, district and school levels need to redesign the funding system to concentrate new dollars and reallocate existing funding on increasing student achievement. Present state and local funding priorities do not reflect what has proved to be effective in improving student achievement. California cannot afford to leave in place a funding system focused on compliance with regulations, cost reimbursement, a one-size-fits-all philosophy and inputs such as the number of textbooks in a classroom. Rather, a new funding system must provide incentives for innovation, initiative and effective performance.

The driving questions in a new funding system must be: "What works best for students to help them reach high achievement levels and standards?" "What resources are needed and how should they be invested to ensure student success?" "How can taxpayers' money be used wisely and efficiently?" It is unlikely that efforts to raise taxes for schools will be successful until these questions are answered to citizens' satisfaction.

Design Funding Policies that Support the New Achievement System

We recommend the Master Plan Panel design and submit to the Legislature a new funding formula that supports the achievement system. The formula should answer the following questions: Who will pay for education and with what taxes? How will resources be invested in ways that improve student and system performance? How can a greater share of educational resources end up in the classroom? What are the costs of reforming education and schools? How will money be distributed in equitable and adequate ways? How can resources be used more efficiently? How can higher education funding, especially that used for teacher preparation, be linked to the K-12 system?

The finance system should include funds to motivate and reward schools for innovation and effective strategies that result in improved student achievement.

Give Schools and Districts More Control Over Resource Allocation

The major recommendations of this report focus on transferring more power and authority to individual districts and schools to decide what strategies to use to achieve state standards, what networks to join and how to invest professional development dollars. Therefore, the primary goal of a new school-finance system should be to give greater control over resource allocation, and perhaps even revenue raising, to local schools and districts. Transferring revenue-raising power would require a thorough review of state tax and spending limitations to see what leeway exists and what changes ought to be made.

The panel also should look at restrictions on the use of various available funds and the results of those restrictions. Categorical programs limit the use of funds to certain activities or lead to unintended results such as students remaining in special-education classrooms too long because the school gets more money for special-education students. Because schoolwide restructuring plans will address the needs of all students, the panel should determine if categorical funding limits can be relaxed or the number of categorical programs reduced.

As the state considers giving more control over funding to local schools and districts, it must take steps to ensure that the ability to raise local funds is equalized across districts. Any movement toward more local funding must be coupled with provisions in the state finance system to ensure no district loses funds because of an inability to raise money locally.

As part of gaining more control, districts and schools that move into the new achievement-based system must be accountable for student learning. The state should allow districts and schools to spend funds as they see fit to meet the needs of their students. The panel should consider a system that rewards schools which improve student achievement and places sanctions on those schools that fail to increase student achievement.

Districts and schools also should have the flexibility to move funds among expenditure categories and across fiscal years as needed, in accordance with prudent fiscal practices.

New Approaches to School Funding

Across the nation, traditional school-funding models are giving way to new approaches to financing and investing in public education.

Different states use various strategies. Here are two examples:

Minnesota is overhauling its school finance system to:

- Reduce reliance on local property taxes and increase the state's share of education funding
- Link education funding to improvement
- Encourage site-based management and budgeting, and reduce the number of state mandates
- Eliminate referendum levies (supplemental school dollars approved by voters).

Education financing will be reconfigured into core instruction aid (the amount needed to ensure students achieve basic goals), support services (counselors, social workers, etc.) and discretionary services (district administration, extracurricular activities and academic electives).

In Michigan, the school-funding system has been restructured along different lines.

To replace a $6 billion hole in the education budget when property tax revenues for schools were eliminated, voters approved alternative revenue-raising measures, including increasing the state sales and cigarette taxes and imposing a real-estate transfer tax. They also approved a 6-mill statewide property tax for homeowners (down from a previous average of 37 mills) and a 24-mill business property tax.

Among other things, Michigan's new school-funding program:

- Increases state funding for at-risk pupils
- Ties increases in per-pupil funding to local districts' revenue-raising ability
- Authorizes all K-12 districts to raise *limited* local-enrichment property taxes with voter approval
- Allows districts to ask voters to approve taxes for building construction, renovation and enrichment.

Focus Money Spent on Staff Preparation and Professional Development on the Academic Needs of Students

Currently, the state (through its K-12 and higher education systems), local districts and individual staff members spend millions of dollars on teacher and administrator preparation and professional development that is not linked to student achievement needs. If professional development needs are decided on a school-by-school basis, as this report recommends, then schools should have authority to spend these funds as needed to help their staff engage in professional development activities that will most benefit students in their schools.The state role, as noted in the professional development section, should be to identify effective programs.

Create a New Investment Strategy Focusing on Technology and Telecommunications

California also needs to create a new investment strategy focusing on technology and telecommunications. Financing details should be part of the technology plan brought forward by the Governor and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. Financing for technology does not have to come through the school finance system; it could be accomplished using a variety of partnerships, funding sources and distribution formulas both inside and outside the school funding system (see the technology section).

Redesign California's Capital Improvement Program

The Master Plan Panel also needs to address the issue of capital investment. Given increasing student population, the state and local communities must work together to shorten the length of time it takes to fund and construct new school buildings that are conducive to the use of technology and telecommunications-based resources. In a state that has such pressure from the sheer volume of students entering the education system and moving between districts and schools, the present system severely limits the ability of districts to provide the space they need to create effective learning environments.

Take Advantage of Federal Initiatives That Provide Support and Flexibility for School Reform

Finally, the Master Plan Panel should map a coordinated strategy for taking advantage of new federal initiatives that provide funding, technical assistance and other support for school reform and restructuring. For example:

- The federal school-to-work initiative provides money for states to redesign career-preparation programs for high school students.
- The new Chapter 1 reauthorization bill includes a development fund for charter schools.
- The new Chapter 1 goals include support for family-school-community partnerships.
- Several new federal programs, including the National Science Foundation's Networking Infrastructure for Education and the Technology in Learning Challenge, provide funding for technology and technology training.
- Goals 2000 provides funding over a five-year period to help states redesign curriculum, assessment and professional development around student standards.

The state, districts and schools should not shy away from applying for federal funding, but instead should take advantage of the new flexibility in federal opportunities and use them to meet their student-achievement goals.

CONCLUSION

What we've proposed in this report will be viewed by some as an exciting challenge, and perhaps by others as overwhelming. Under the best of circumstances, we know it will be a long-term, challenging undertaking. We also believe that *now* is the time for people to come together — the Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Legislature, State Board of Education, State Education Department, higher education leaders, local school boards, district and county superintendents, teachers, administrators, pupil services professionals, non-certified school staff, parents, students, community members, businesspeople and others — to improve education for all children in California.

Now is the time to take action to improve California's education system because people are frustrated with seeing so many children fall through the cracks in schools. They fear for the future as more and more children choose violence over productive lives. They are dismayed with the amount of money that goes into public education, often with dismal results. And they are increasingly intolerant of political bickering that yields little improvement in schools.

Accordingly, throughout this report we have set out a tight timeline for implementing the recommendations. We understand the strong likelihood that circumstances will arise, which we cannot foresee, that will cause delays. Nonetheless, we end our recommendations by recapping the major areas of change to be addressed, the general timeline we suggest for those tasks and the individuals and groups who need to work together to achieve these improvements.

As the ECS team worked on this effort over the last year with people from across the state, we were asked by many why we would agree to take on a task such as this during a time of such political polarization in California. But even as we met with people of differing political parties and beliefs about what should and should not be changed to improve California's education system, we found agreement. More often than not, policymakers, educators, state and local board members, union representatives, parents, university officials, higher education leaders and others agreed on the need for dramatically changing the current education system; deregulating and decentralizing the system; empowering local communities; involving the public throughout the change process; setting and measuring high academic standards for all students, schools and districts — in essence, we found general agreement on our recommendations as a whole.

In short, California's education and political leaders have come together — through ECS — to write this report. While they haven't agreed to each paragraph, they provided us with information, as well as their ideas and hopes for the future of California's schools. And while we were greatly encouraged by the high level of consensus, it seems many people were willing to say things to us that they are not yet willing to say to one another.

With this in mind, we end our recommendations with a note of both caution and optimism. Californians need an issue around which its leadership and people can rally. They need one issue in which they will not focus on turf but will forget their political and personal differences. **Vastly improving the opportunity for all children in California to receive the best education possible must be that issue.**

***NOW** is the time to take action to improve California's education system . . .*

As California turns to the next phase — away from discussion, analysis and drafting a plan to implementing a new achievement-based system of schools — it will be important to know there **is** a base of agreement. This base will get the state and its people past the hurdles, beyond the differences and problems, to a new system that will serve California's students well in the future.

Californians now must sit down together and determine how to make their desires to improve the education system work. It will take strong, long-term political leadership and the commitment of a wide array of individuals and groups to take these recommendations and turn them into policies that make a difference for students, teachers and communities. Nonetheless, the time for that commitment is now. The price of waiting — for a better political climate, better economic conditions or absolute agreement on the perfect solution for California's schools — is far too high.

TIMELINE 1995-2002

Master Plan Panel

1995 Governor, Legislature and State Superintendent of Public Instruction (Superintendent) appoint members to serve on panel. Master Plan Panel (Panel) begins work immediately.

1995 Beginning in 1995 and each year thereafter, the ECS California commissioners' network will convene key legislators, Governor's staff members, Board and Superintendent to assess the progress and process of the Master Plan.

1996 Panel submits Master Plan to Governor, Superintendent, State Board of Education (Board), Legislature, local school boards and public.

1997 Panel remains active at least through early 1997 and is left in place long enough to ensure leadership through mid-stages of implementation of the Master Plan.

Focus on Student Achievement

Develop Standards

1995 Panel, in conjunction with the Department of Education (Department), draft model standards for education.

1995 Public discussions are held across state on standards.

1995 Panel presents standards to Governor, Superintendent, Board, Legislature and local school boards for adoption.

1996 New statewide standards established.

Develop Student Assessment System

1995 Legislature and Governor pass legislation to fund development of new statewide assessment system (including guidelines for size and shape of assessment system).

95/96 Panel, in conjunction with Department, oversees development of assessment system.

1996 Public discussions are held across state on assessment system

1996 Initial field testing of assessment system.

1997 New statewide assessment program established.

Develop Accountability System

95/96 Panel proposes accountability system for schools and districts ready to move into new achievement system.

1996 Governor, Superintendent, Board, Department, Legislature and local school boards approve new accountability system.

1997 New accountability system established.

Reconnect Schools and Communities

Design Transition Process for Schools and Districts

1995 Panel designs transition process for districts to move into new achievement system, including requirements for districts' Enterprise Plans or school charters. Requirements relate to professional development, network memberships, how progress will be measured and so on.

1995 Governor and Legislature agree to raise cap on charter schools and tie accountability for charter schools to the new statewide standards and assessment.

95/96 Governor, Superintendent, Board, Legislature and local school boards review and adopt transition process. Board establishes criteria for moving to the new achievement system.

95/96 Governor, Superintendent and Board establish timespan for all districts to move to new achievement system.

2001-2 All districts have moved into new achievement-based system.

Stimulate Community Involvement

1995 Panel designs policies that encourage and support local control.

1995 Governor, Superintendent and other state leaders begin a dialogue with the public about new responsibilities communities have for stewardship of their schools under achievement-based system.

Build Support for the New System of Schools

Create Conditions Under Which People in Schools Can Succeed

1995 Panel drafts incentives for the K-12 and postsecondary systems to redesign teacher preparation programs. In this undertaking, Panel works with representatives of the K-12 and postsecondary systems and with practitioners, networks and the California Teacher Credentialing Commission.

1995 Panel, in conjunction with the California Teacher Credentialing Commission, develops a competency-based credentialing process.

1996 Panel submits new teacher credentialing and preparation proposals to the Board and Legislature.

95/96 Panel reviews, evaluates and catalogues a diverse group of professional development suppliers and widely disseminates the resulting inventory.

95/96 Panel develops a strategy to increase number and effectiveness of minority and bilingual teachers in the system of schools.

95/96 Panel explores ways to introduce greater flexibility into the collective bargaining process.

1996 Panel submits recommendations pertaining to collective bargaining and other employer-employee relations to Board and Legislature.

Identify and Strengthen Networks, Partnerships and Support Structures

95/96 Panel, in conjunction with Department, identifies, evaluates and catalogues existing and potential networks and partnerships and widely disseminates the resulting inventory.

95/96 If appropriate, Panel, in conjunction with the Governor, Superintendent and Board, develops and submits a proposal to federal agencies to blend funds across categorical lines to give the state greater flexibility in addressing the needs of children, families and communities.

1996 Panel develops incentives for schools and districts participating in the new achievement system to take part in partnerships and networks.

1996 Panel submits network and partnership participation incentives to Board and Legislature.

Expand Technological Capacity

1995 Governor and Superintendent review all major technology initiatives and implementation strategies and develop action plan to expand technological capacity.

1995 Governor and Superintendent submit technology action plan to Board, Legislature and local school boards for review, adoption and implementation.

Attend to the Special Needs of Urban Schools and Districts

1995 Panel requests from Board a definition of "large urban district" to allow clusters of schools rather than an entire urban district to move to new achievement system.

1995 Governor and Legislature, in conjunction with Superintendent, appoint a task force to work in conjunction with the Panel, the School-To-Career Task Force and others involved in improving urban education to develop a comprehensive strategy for restoring the strength and vitality of urban schools.

Provide an Adequately and Equitably Funded Education System

995 Panel should request from the Board a definition of "large urban district" to allow clusters of schools rather than an entire urban district to move to the new achievement system.

1996 Panel aligns the education funding system to match the new achievement-based system, which gives schools and districts more control over resource allocation, more closely ties school finance to school improvement and student achievement, and addresses the need for more buildings and capital improvements.

96/97 Panel submits new funding proposal to Governor, Superintendent, Board, Legislature and local school boards for review and adoption.

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